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Section 4

Southeast Colorado River Basin

Utah State Water Plan

Demographics and Economic Future

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Colorado River Basin encompasses one of the most isolated areas in the state. Archaeological investigations have found remains of ancient Anasazi communities established by the Basketmakers and Cliff Dwellers throughout the area. The remains of irrigation systems have been found indicating established agricultural oriented communities.

The Southern Ute Indians were established in the area by the early 1500s and the Navajo Indians by the 1600s. The Ute Indians were hunters while the Navajo Indians were agriculture and livestock oriented. The Ute Reservation and the Navajo Reservation were both established in 1868, after the "Long Walk" of the Navajo Indians. The government established the Utes in Allen Canyon and Montezuma Canyon with the idea they could make a living from farming. The Navajos stayed south of the San Juan River. In the 1930s, the federal government took most of the livestock from the Navajos and killed them in order to reverse the over-use of the rangeland. This was catastrophic to their livelihood.

In the 1870s, a number of small scale cattle operations began to filter into the area. These were followed by large herds from Colorado and Texas. The livestock economy was soon infiltrated by early settlers in the 1880s who established irrigated agriculture along with small commercial enterprises. The discovery of gold in the La Sal Mountains in the 1890s was followed by the oil boom of the 1920s and uranium in the 1950s. This brought more

diversity to the regional economy with the passing of these boom and bust cycles.

By the 1950s, the Ute Indians were moving into the White Mesa area where they improved their farming and livestock raising operations. They built homes, brought in electricity and provided culinary water to the community. The White Mesa

Council was established in 1978 to be the local governing body.

The Navajo Indians started working off the reservation during the 1940s and 1950 in order to make a living. When oil royalties became available in the 1960s and 1970s, it provided new opportunities for improvements in education, health care and economic development. The Utah Navajo Development Council was

Expanding recreation and tourism activities are bringing increasing numbers of commercial enterprises into the area. This swing away from traditional agriculture attracts an inward migration of people while keeping others from leaving.

established as a private, non-profit organization to administer these funds.

However, the Ute Mountain Ute Indians living in the White Mesa area and the Navajo Indians living on the reservation still have a lower standard of living than people in the surrounding areas. Some are leaving to find employment while others are staying in the area to work and improve their economic climate.

The overall local basin economy has now become more stable with a diverse mixture of agriculture, government, services and trade sectors. Tourism and recreational activities are making major impacts on the economy while the manufacturing industry is important.

The population of the basin was 916 in 1890 and had more than doubled to 2,172 by the turn of the century. By 1950, it had increased to 7,218 with nearly all of the increase coming in San Juan County. The 1950s uranium boom nearly tripled the Grand County population while the San Juan population only doubled. By 1990, the total population was 19,241. In 1998, the population was 23,247 (1.1 percent of the state) which equates to only 2.1 people per square mile. As only private land is used for residential use, the density in the off-reservation populated area is 20.3 people per square mile. The density on reservation lands is 3.6 people per square mile.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

The population growth rate from 1980 to 1998 was only 0.40 percent per year. This is only about one-fifth of the statewide annual growth rate of 1.90 percent for the same period. Grand County is expected to increase 5.0 percent from 1998 to 2000, mostly due to tourism and recreation. San Juan County will increase by less than one percent for the same period. The 1998 population of Grand County was 9,815 and is projected to be 21,955 by 2020. The increase is less dramatic in San Juan County with an increase from 13,432 in 1998 to 17,522 by 2020. Annual growth rates for this period are 3.8

percent for Grand County and 1.12 percent for San Juan County. The increase in San Juan County includes the increase of the Navajo Nation. The average rate of state-wide population increase is estimated at 2.1 percent from the year 2000 through 2020. The Navajo Nation, Department of Water Resources uses a growth rate of 2.48 percent. The current and projected population is given in Table 4-1 and shown on Figure 4-1. Data is not adequate to make city projections to 2050. The county projections to 2050 are shown in Table 4-2 and on Figure 4-1a.



Homes in Aneth

The Navajo Indians comprised over one-half of the San Juan County population in 1990 with most of them living on the Navajo Indian Reservation. The Navajo Nation population in the seven populated chapters all or partly in Utah is currently estimated at 6,865. A chapter is a political subdivision of the Navajo Nation. In addition, there are over 1,200 Navajo Indians living outside the reservation.

The Navajo Nation uses different demographics in terms of projected population and economic growth.⁸⁴ Using their growth rate of 2.48 percent, the Navajo Nation Indian population on the reservation is projected to be 11,768 by 2020 and 24,540 by 2050.

There are also 290 members of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe living on tribal lands around White Mesa Village and in the Allen Canyon area west of Blanding. The Ute Indian population is projected to be 384 by 2020, an

Table 4-1 POPULATION PROJECTIONS ^a			
County/Community	1998	2000	2020
Grand			
Castle Valley	388	371	778
Moab	5,268	5,919	13,018
Balance of County	4,159	4,488	8,159
Grand County Total	9,815	10,778	21,955
San Juan			
Blanding	3,243	3,293	4,202
Bluff ^b	293	296	500
Mexican Hat	79	80	102
Monticello	1,941	1,971	2,515
Montezuma Creek	608	618	788
White Mesa Village	220	223	285
Aneth (NN)	757	768	980
Balance of Navajo Nation	5,510	5,593	7,138
Balance of County	781	793	1,012
San Juan County Total	13,432	13,635	17,522
Navajo Nation Total	6,865	6,979	8,906
Basin Total	23,247	24,413	39,477
Note: ^a All population totals are estimated for only the portion of each county within the basin boundaries. ^b Bluff population numbers provided by Southeast AOG. ^c Projections by the Navajo Nation, for comparison. Sources: 1. State of Utah; Governor's Office of Planning & Budget, State of Utah, Utah Data Guide, Spring/Summer 1998. 2. The Navajo Nation, Division of Community Development, American Indian Resident Population Census by Chapter: 1980, 1990, & 1997.			

Table 4-2 COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS			
County	1998	2020	2050
Grand	9,763	21,955	65,168
San Juan	13,432	17,522	24,902
Total	23,247	39,477	90,070

Figure 4-1
POPULATION PROJECTIONS

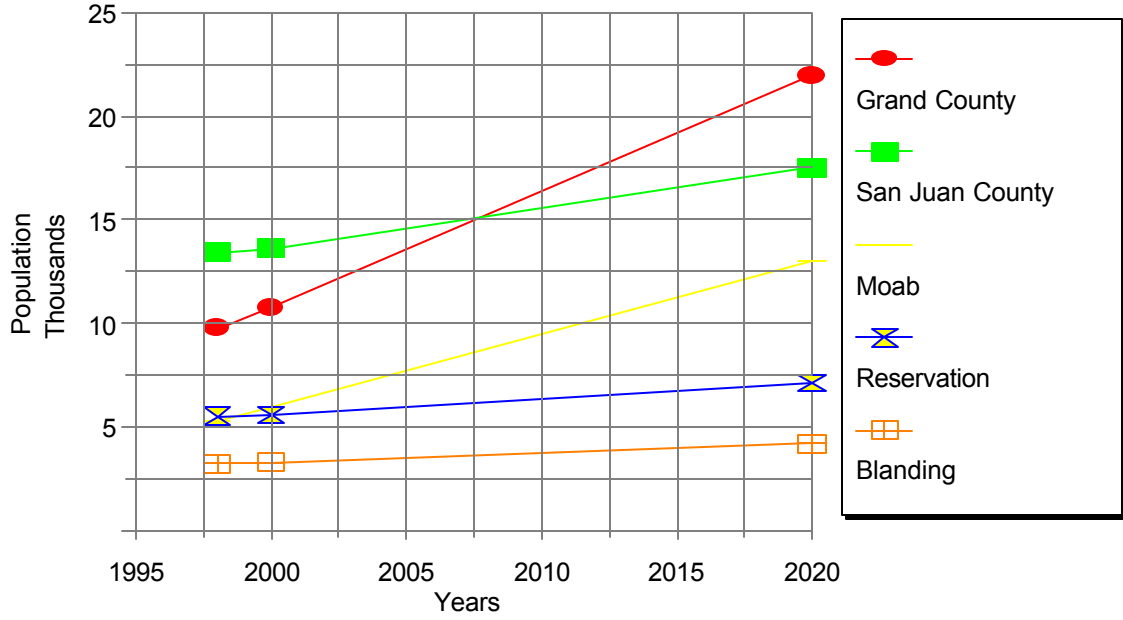
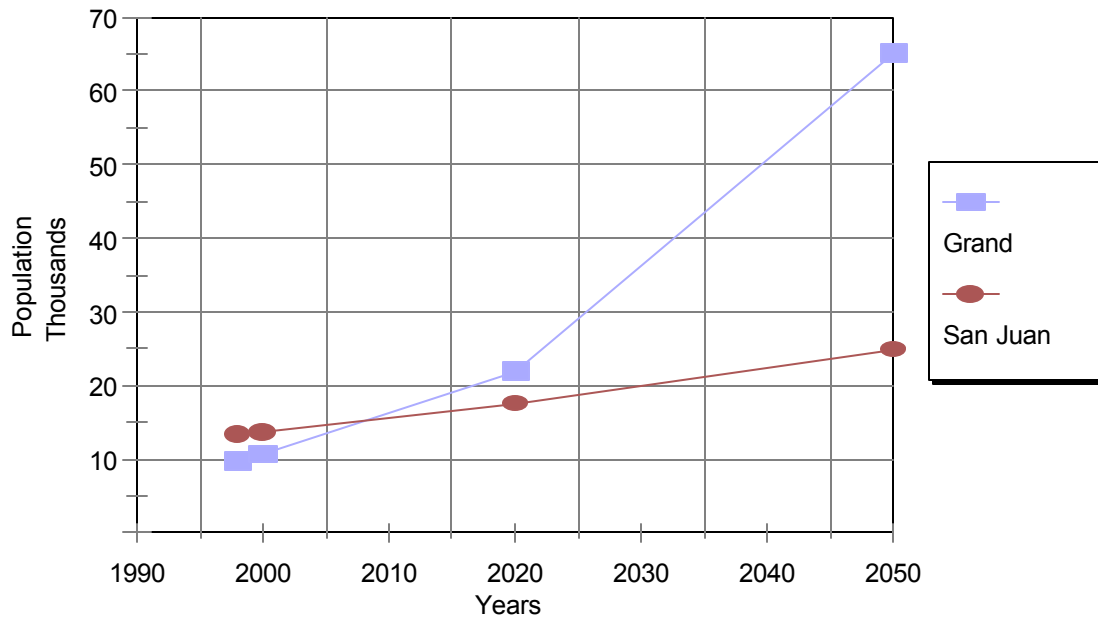


Figure 4-1a
County Population Projections to 2050



annual growth rate of 1.2 percent. The current and projected Indian population as determined in the San Juan County Water Master Plan (1998)⁹⁶ is shown in Table 4-3.

4.3 EMPLOYMENT

Even though this is considered a rural area, 1998 employment in the agriculture sector was only 3.2 percent of the basin total. Non-agriculture wages and salary employment accounted for 9,019 jobs out of the 11,839 total.

The largest employment in 1998 was about equal in four sectors. These were 2,460 jobs in the trade sector; government (local, state and federal), 2,359; non-farm proprietor, 2,410; and service, 2,337 jobs. The remaining sectors each provide from 137 to 591 jobs. These are shown in Table 4-4. Employment projections by county are shown on Figure 4-2 and projections by major industry are shown on Figure 4-3.

4.4 ECONOMIC FUTURE

Economic projections for most of the state are made utilizing the State of Utah Process Economic and Demographics (UPED)

projection model. This model takes into account a number of variables assessing the demographic and industrial mix of an area's overall economy. The model incorporates historical employment growth patterns along with assumptions regarding labor force survival rates. Any transient and part time population occupying the hotel rooms and condominiums at regional recreation and tourist areas are not accounted for in the UPED model. Population estimates for the unincorporated community of Bluff in San Juan County are not computed in the UPED Model. Personnel at the Southeast AOG, working with local officials of the San



Construction is increasing

Table 4-3
INDIAN POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Geographic Area	1997	2020	2050
White Mesa Reservation	290	384	582
Navajo Reservation	6,037	8,255	12,405
Dennehotso Chapter	32	41	56
Navajo Mountain Chapter	427	557	787
Oljato Chapter	1,769	2,333	3,346
Mexican Water Chapter	329	541	1,037
Red Mesa Chapter	1,150	1,706	2,854
Teec Nos Pos Chapter	105	133	182
Aneth Chapter	2,225	2,914	4,143
Indian Total	6,327	8,609	12,987

Source: San Juan County Water Master Plan prepared by Wright Water Engineers, Inc. ⁹⁶

Table 4-4
EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

County/Industry	1998	2000	2010	2020
Grand				
Agriculture ^a	103	102	97	89
Mining	118	125	162	181
Construction	210	274	556	741
Manufacturing	59	65	94	124
TCPU ^b	129	146	232	306
Trade	1,754	1,949	2,942	3,818
FIRE ^c	97	109	168	220
Services ^d	1,333	1,500	2,383	3,238
Government	832	921	1,447	1,929
Non-Farm Proprietors	1,551	1,758	2,841	3,735
County Total	6,186	6,949	10,922	14,381
Non-Ag W&S Employment	4,533	5,087	7,984	10,557
San Juan				
Agriculture ^a	281	279	264	243
Mining	225	227	231	235
Construction	188	202	253	279
Manufacturing	532	539	579	641
TCPU ^b	291	310	393	460
Trade	706	729	846	922
FIRE ^c	40	41	47	51
Services ^d	1,004	1,057	1,329	1,534
Government	1,527	1,558	1,839	2,024
Non-Farm Proprietors ^e	859	896	1,069	1,160
County Total	5,653	5,838	6,850	7,549
Non-Ag W&S Employment	4,486	4,635	5,489	6,118
Basin Totals				
Agriculture ^a	384	381	361	332
Mining	343	352	393	416
Construction	398	476	809	1,020
Manufacturing	591	604	673	765
TCPU ^b	420	456	625	766
Trade	2,460	2,678	3,788	4,740
FIRE ^c	137	150	215	271
Services ^d	2,337	2,557	3,712	4,772
Government	2,359	2,479	3,286	3,953
Non-Farm Proprietors ^e	2,410	2,654	3,910	4,895
Basin Total	11,839	12,787	17,772	21,930
Non-Ag W&S Employment	9,019	9,722	13,473	16,675

Notes:

^a Both agriculture and non-agriculture wages and salary employment include agricultural services.

^b Transportation, communications, and public utilities.

^c Finance, insurance, and real estate.

^d Includes private household employment; excludes agricultural services employment.

^e Utah Department of Employment Security's definition.

Sources:

1. State of Utah; Governors Office of Planning & Budget, State of Utah Economic & Demographic Projections, 1994.
2. The Navajo Nation, Division of Community Development, American Indian Resident Profile, Spring 1995.

Figure 4-2
Employment by County

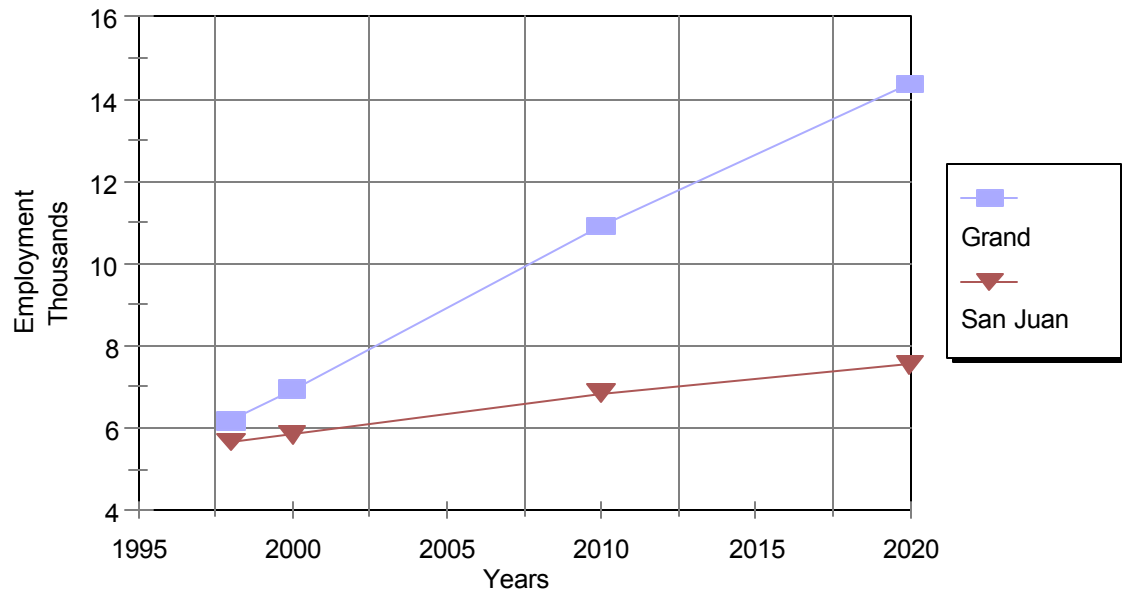
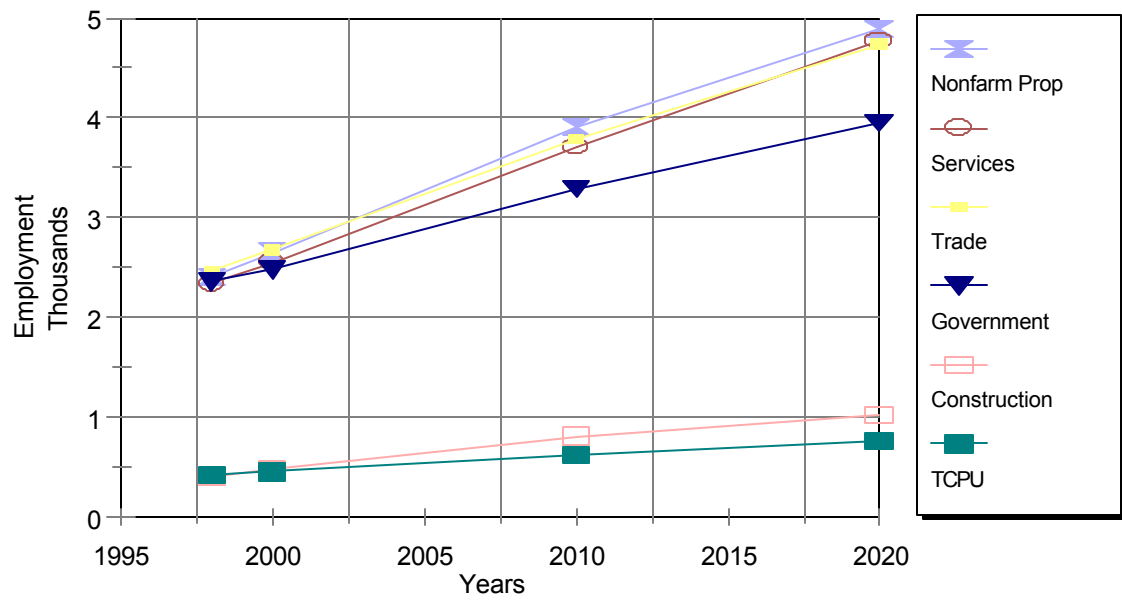


Figure 4-3
Basin Employment by Major Industry





Moab Main Street

Juan County Service Area #1 (Bluff), provide population estimates for this area.

In terms of employment, the number of jobs increased by an average of 0.8 percent over a one-year period from the third quarter of 1995 to the third quarter of 1996 for the basin non-Indian population. Overall, annual employment is projected to grow by about 2.8 percent per year to 2020.

The current rate of unemployment within the Navajo Nation is over 50 percent. This rate is not expected to change over the foreseeable future. About one-half of the Navajo families live below the federal poverty level.

Employment opportunities for the local Indian population are projected to grow at nearly the same rate as the population at 1.1 percent per year. The Navajo Nation Water Management Branch is using a growth rate of 2.48 percent for water demand projections.⁸⁴ Currently, more than 40 percent of the Navajo families haul water for their domestic water needs.

Most rapid employment growth includes state and local government, wholesale and retail trade, non-farm proprietors and various services. Continued economic growth is expected to be maintained by further increases in all sectors of the economy with mining showing only minor gains and agriculture declining slightly. □